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General debate on national experience in population matters: realizing the future we want — integrating population issues into sustainable development, including in the post-2015 development agenda

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The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Introduction

The Head of States and Government, high-level representatives met at Rio de Janeiro from 20 to 22 June, 2012 with participation of civil society organisations to renew sustainable development and promote economic, social and environmental sustainability for present and future generations. The aim of the meeting was to deliberate on "the future we want" and discussion therein includes but not limited to:

(a) Eradication of Poverty,

(b) Freedom, peace and security, respect for all human rights, adequate standard of living.

(c) Democracy, good governance and the rule of law at national and international level.

Bringing to reality the achievement of these goals and objectives the United Nations General Assembly in May 2012 in the discussion for the post-2015 development agenda, set up a task force team, and the task force team of the United Nations was saddled with the responsibilities of appraising the post 2015 development agenda and the task force team suggested four key dimensions for the attainment of the future we want and the achievement of the post 2015 development agenda and these includes:

(a) Inclusive economic and social development

(b) Environmental sustainability

(c) Peace and security.

Objectives

Sustainable development is a roadmap, an action plan for achieving sustainability in any activity that uses resources and where immediate and intergenerational replication is demanded.

The World Bank defines sustainable development as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

With critical analysis, one cannot help but ponder are we on the brink of achieving the future we want going by the post 2015 development agenda of the United Nations or at the verge of compromising the future generation at the expenses of the present generation.

Purpose of the statement

The United Nations set the year 2015 as a the time when certain developments ought to have been attained. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the future we want putting into consideration the population challenges, previous statistics and future expectations in comparison with the millennium development goals and towards achieving the post-2015 development agenda.

Facts and figures

A research by the journal *Pivotal Moment* on population, justice, and the environmental challenges states that more than 7 billion people currently inhabit the planet, compared to only 3 billion in 1967. Every year about 135 million people are born and 55 million people die adding 80 million to the global population. Almost half of the global population is under the age of 25 and their decisions during their reproductive years will determine whether we have 6 billion or 14 billion people by 2100.

The important fact about this statistic is that population is increasing at a geometric progression and the people that will make up the population in 2100 are already born. If nothing is done to curtail the population rate at this moment, the human wants will continue to be insatiable because the population is not growing in proportionate rate with development; a more decisive sustainable development needs to be put in place to achieve the post-2015 development agenda.

We have to start strengthening the understanding in all the countries of the world that population is a choice not an inexorable force of nature. In order to keep the economy in a state of sustainable development, a population must grow in correlation with the economic development.

Way forward and recommendations

Realizing the future we want in the midst of growing population and development, the following criteria need to be checked and integrated to integrate population growth into sustainable development.

(a) Empowering women and families regarding the number of children they should have; women's empowerment in this dimension encompasses knowledge of contraceptives for women, promoting of birth control and child spacing. In January 29, 2012 the Obama Administration finalized a ruling that insurance companies cover contraceptives without a broad religious exemption (New York Times January 2012).

(b) Education and job opportunities especially for women: This will strengthen the productivity of the growing population and produce a more sustainable development.

(c) Fight against corruption; corruption has affected many economies in the world and has resulted in many countries not achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, it has affected developments and investment, led to increases in the rate of illiteracy and has resulted in perpetual poverty in the majority of countries in Africa. Statistics indicates that nearly half of the world's population, which is equivalent to 3 billion people live, on less than $2.50 per day, more than 1.3 billion live in extreme poverty that is less than $1.25 per day. The statistics further reveal that 1 billion children worldwide are living in poverty and 22,000 children die each day due to poverty. About 870 million people worldwide do not have enough food to eat (United Nations Children Fund). Other sources show that more than 1 billion people lack adequate access to clean drinking water and an estimated 400 million of these are children. Because unclean water yields illness, roughly 443 million school days are missed every year. In 2011, 165 million children under the age of five were stunted (reduced rate of growth and development) due to chronic malnutrition (UNICEF). From the above-mentioned

findings and statistics it could be enunciated that corruption is a disease that needs to be erased from all political and economic platforms to give room for the development of infrastructure, and service to the electorate.

(d) Social and traditional norms: a cursory examination of social and traditional norms in some cultures reveal that some traditional norms and cultures are working against the achievement of the post-2015 development agenda. Thus, a collaborative effort and agenda must be put in place to eradicate this phenomenon that has affected the life of others negatively and caused irreparable damage for the life of many.

(e) Eradication of illiteracy (especially for women): data released by UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) in 2011 indicates that there is a continual rise in the literacy rates for adults, youth and young women between the ages 15 to 24, but still lags behind young men. Despite this gain, 774 million adults (15 years and older) still cannot read or write, two-thirds of them (493 million) are women. Among youth, 123 million are illiterate of which 76 million are female. This depicts that illiteracy still remains dominant among young people, who will affect future population growth by 2100.

Conclusion

Realizing the future we want amidst growing population, environmental degradation, political instability and economic imbalance requires collective collaboration of governments at the global level in order to promote sustainable development.

Research has revealed that corruption has affected all governments and government agencies. It is our expectation that the United Nations will present opportunities to strengthen education and deal with corruption in the most affected countries in order to realize the post 2015-development agenda.

Furthermore, the United Nations needs to double its effort in the provision of peace in the world and for the promotion of peaceful co-existence among neighbouring countries.

Lastly, it is our recommendations and expectations that civil society organisations (CSO) be carried along and given a participatory role in the realization of "the future we want" and for the achievement of the post-2015 development agenda.